

Types of Point of View

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

point of view: method of narrating a short story, novel, narrative poem, or narrative nonfiction work

narrator: the character or voice who tells the events in a work of literature

first-person point of view: the narrator is a character in a work of literature

second-person point of view: the narrator speaks directly to the reader or main character

third-person point of view: the narrator is not a character in the story

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify who and what. Ask, “*Who* is telling the story and *what* does that person know?”

- **First person:** A first-person narrator tells a story in which he or she actively participates. A first-person narrator describes what’s going on inside his or her mind and may also describe other characters through observations.
- **Second person:** This narrator is outside of the story, speaking directly to the main character. Second-person point of view is sometimes used in poetry. It is difficult for a writer to work with, so it is rarely used.
- **Third-person point of view:** This person tells the story but does *not* participate in the events of the story. However, he or she usually knows the thoughts and feelings of one character, who is not himself or herself. A third-person narrator may also know what is going on inside the minds of all the characters.

Step 2: Look at the pronouns. The pronouns in the narrative part of the story, not in the dialogue, help identify the point of view from which the story is told.

- **First-person point of view:** The narrator uses first-person pronouns such as *I*, *me*, *my*, *we*, *us*, and *our*.
- **Second-person point of view:** The narrator uses second-person pronouns such as *you* and *yours*.
- **Third-person point of view:** The narrator uses third-person pronouns such as *he*, *she*, and *they*.

MODEL POINTS OF VIEW

First-person: *I* threw the ball and watched as Howard caught it.

Second-person: *You* threw the ball and watched as Howard caught it.

Third-person: Charlie threw the ball; *he* watched as Howard caught it.